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TWO LECTURES
ON
KARMA YOGA.



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BY

Swami Vivekananda.



- (i) Karma in its Effect on Character.
- (ii) Each is Great in his own Place.

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KARMA IN ITS EFFECT ON CHARACTER

The word *Karma* is derived from the Sanskrit *Kri*, to do; all action is *Karma*. Technically this word also means, sometimes, the effect of actions. In connection with metaphysics it sometimes means that effect of which all our past actions were the cause. But in Karma Yoga we have simply to do with the word Karma as meaning work. The goal of all mankind is knowledge; that is the one ideal placed before us by the Eastern Philosophy. Pleasure is not the goal of man, but knowledge. Pleasure and happiness come to an end. It is a mistake that mankind makes, to think that pleasure is the goal; that is the cause of all the miseries we have in the world, because man foolishly thinks that pleasure is the ideal. After a time he finds that it is not happiness, but knowledge, towards which he is going, and that both pain and pleasure are great teachers, that evil as well as good is a great teacher. As pleasure and pain pass before his soul they leave upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions is what is called man's "character." If you take the character of any man, it really is but the aggregate of tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind; you will find that misery and happiness were equal factors in the formation of that character, good and evil have had an equal share in the formation of character, and in some instances misery is a greater teacher than happiness. In studying the great characters that the world has produced, I dare say that in the vast majority of cases it was misery that taught more than happiness, it was poverty that taught more than wealth, it was blows that brought out the fire, rather than praise.

Now this knowledge, again, is inherent in a man; no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. What we say a man "knows" in strict psychological language should be what a man "uncovers" or "unveils"; what a man "learns" is really what a man "uncovers," the word uncover meaning "he takes the cover off his own soul," which is a mine of infinite knowledge. We say Newton discovered gravitation. Was it sitting anywhere in a corner waiting for him? It was in his own mind; the time came and he found it out. All knowledge that the world has ever received comes from the mind; the infinite library of the universe is in your own mind. The external world is simply the suggestion, the occasion which sets you to study your own mind, but the object of your study is always your own mind. The falling of an apple gave the suggestion to Newton, and he studied his own mind; he re-read all the previous links of his mind, and discovered a new link among them, which we call the law of gravitation. It was not the apple or anything in the centre of the earth. So all knowledge, both secular and spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not uncovered, but remains covered, and when the covering is being slowly taken off, we say "we are learning," and the advance of knowledge is made by the advance of this process of uncovering. The man from whom this veil is being lifted is the more knowing man, the man upon whom it lies thick, is ignorant, and the man from whom it has gone entirely away, is the all-knowing, the omniscient. There have been omniscient men, and will be yet again, as I believe.

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I believe, too, that there will be myriads more in the cycles to come. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind; friction is the suggestion that brings out that fire. So with all our actions—our tears and our smiles, our joys and our sorrows, our weeping and laughter, curses and blessings, praise and blame—with every one of them we find in the long run, if we calmly study our own selves, that they have been brought out by so many blows. The result is what we are; all these blows taken together are called *Karma*—work, action. Every mental and physical force that impinges upon the soul, by which, as it were, fire is struck from it, by which its own power and knowledge are discovered, is *Karma*, the word being used in its universal sense. So we are doing *Karma* all the time. I am talking to you; that is *Karma*. You are listening; that is *Karma*. We breathe; that is *Karma*. We walk—*Karma*. We talk—*Karma*. Everything we do, physical or mental, is *Karma*, and is leaving its marks on us.

There are certain deeds which are, as it were, the aggregate, the sum total, of a large number of smaller deeds. If we stand near the sea-shore and hear the waves dashing against the shingle, we think it is such a great noise, and yet we know that one wave is really composed of millions and millions of minute waves; each one of these is making a noise, and yet we do not catch the sound of them; it is only when they become the big aggregate that we catch it. So every pulsation of the heart is doing work; certain things we feel, and they become tangible to us; they are, at the same time, the aggregate of a number of small actions. If you really want to judge the character of a man look not at his great acts. Every fool becomes a hero at one time or another. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are the things which will tell you the real character of a great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to greatness, but he is really a great man whose character is great always, the same wherever he be.

This *Karma* in its effect on character, is the most tremendous power that man has to deal with. Man is, as it were, a centre, and he is attracting all the powers of the universe towards himself, and in this centre is fusing them all, and throwing them back again in an immense current. That centre is the *real* man, the almighty, the omniscient, and he draws the whole universe towards him; good and bad, misery and happiness, all running towards him, and clinging round him. And out of these he fashions the tremendous power called character, and throws it outwards. As he has the power of drawing in anything, so he has the power of throwing it out.

Now all the motions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us, are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, or cities, ships, men-of-war, everything is simply the manifestation of the will of man, and this will is made by character, and character is manufactured by *Karma*. As is *Karma*, so is the manifestation of the will. The tremendous-willed men that the world has produced have all been tremendous workers—gigantic men, with wide wills, powerful enough to overturn worlds; and they got that by persistent work through ages and ages. Such a gigantic will as that of a Buddha, or a Jesus, cannot be got in one life; for we know who their fathers were. We do not hear that their fathers spoke a word for the good of mankind. Millions and millions of carpenters like Joseph have gone, millions are still living. Millions and millions of petty kings like Buddha's father have been in the world. If it is only a case of hereditary transmission, how do you account for this little petty prince, who was not, perhaps, obeyed by his own

servants, producing this son, whom half a world worships? How do you account for this gap between the carpenter and his son, whom millions and millions of human beings worship as God? It cannot be accounted for there. This gigantic will which Buddha threw over the world, which came out from Jesus, whence came it to them? Whence came this accumulation of power? It must have been there through ages and ages, keeping on getting bigger and bigger, until it burst on society in a Buddha or a Jesus; and it flows on even to the present day.

And all this is determined by *Karma*—work. None can get anything except he earns it; this is an eternal law; we may think it is not so, but in the long run it slips through our fingers. A man may struggle all his life to become rich; he may cheat thousands; but he finds at last that he has not deserved wealth and his life becomes a trouble and a nuisance to him; and he learns that he cannot have anything unless he deserves it. We may go on accumulating, only for our physical enjoyment, but every little thing which we earn is ours. A fool may buy all the books in the world, but they will lie in his library, and he will only be able to read those he deserves, and this deserving it is, which is represented by that word *Karma*. Our *Karma* determines what we deserve and what we can assimilate. We are responsible for what we are; and whatever we want ourselves to be, we have the power to make of ourselves. If what we are now, has been made by our own actions in the past, it certainly follows that whatever we want to be, we can make of ourselves in the future, by our present actions; so we have to learn how to act. You will say, "What is the use of learning how to work? Everyone works in this world!" But there is such a thing as frittering away your energy. With regard to this Karma Yoga, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, that Karma Yoga means the doing of work, but with discrimination. It is, as it were, the science of work, meaning such work as will bring the greatest results. You must remember that all this action is simply to bring out the power of the mind which is already there, to wake up the soul. The power is inside every man, and the knowledge is there; these different acts are like blows to bring it out, to cause this giant to wake up.

A man works for various motives; there cannot be work without a motive. Some people want fame, and they work for fame. Others want money, and they work for money. Others want power, and they work for power. Others want to go to heaven, and they work to go to heaven. Others want to leave a name when they die, as they do in China, where no man gets a title until he is dead. That is a better way after all. When a man does very good things, they give a title of nobility to his father, who is dead, or to his grandfather. Some people work for that. Some of the Mahomedan sects work all their lives, to have a grand tomb when they die. I know sects among whom, as soon as a child is born, they begin to prepare for his tomb; that is the greatest work a man has to do; and the larger and finer the tomb, the better off the man is supposed to be. Others work as a penance; do all sorts of wicked things, then erect a temple, or give something to the priests to buy them off, and gain a passport to heaven. They think that will clear them, and then they will go scot-free. These are various motives for work.

Work for work's sake. There are a few, who are really the salt of the earth, in every country, who work for work's sake; who do not care for name or fame, who do not care to go to heaven. They would be horrified at the idea of going to heaven; they would rather be anywhere else. They work, just because it is going to do good. There are others, who work with still higher motives; they do good



to the poor, and help mankind from still higher motives, because it is good and they love good. Now to return to this matter of motives, that of name and fame; they bring only immediate results; they come to us when we are old, and are done. If I, all my life, work for fame, I generally find I get a little in the long run; if I work for name, struggle all my life for it, I find in the end that I get a little name; similarly if I want anything material, I get it in the long run, and there it stops. But if a man works without any selfish motive in view, what becomes of him? Does he not gain anything? Yes, he is the higher gainer. Unselfishness is more paying, only people have not the patience to practise it. It is more paying in physical value also. Love and truth and unselfishness are not only moral figures, but the highest ideal, because they are such a manifestation of power. In the first place, a man who can work for five days or for five minutes without any selfish motive whatever, without thinking of the future, or heaven, or punishment, or anything of the kind, becomes a giant. It is hard to do it, but in the heart of our heart we know the value of it, and what good it brings. It is the greatest manifestation of power, and a tremendous restraint; to restrain, is a manifestation of more power than all outgoing action put together. A carriage with four horses may rush down a hill, but the coachman may restrain the horses. Which is the greater manifestation of power, to let them go, or to restrain them? A ball flying through the air goes a long distance and then falls. Another is cut short in its flight by striking against a wall, and intense heat is generated by this restraint. So all this outgoing follows a selfish motive; it is transitory; and what it reaps will be transitory also. But if it is restrained it will develop. So in this case of restraint, the restraint will produce a gigantic will, that character which makes a Christ or a Buddha. Foolish men do not know this secret; they want to rule mankind. The fool does not know that he can rule the whole world, if he waits. Wait a few years, restrain that foolish idea of government, and that man from whom it is wholly gone, will restrain the universe. But the majority of us cannot see beyond a few years. Just as animals and brutes cannot see beyond a few steps. Just a narrow circle; that is our world. We have not the patience to look beyond, and so we become immoral and wicked. It is our weakness, our powerlessness.

But even the lower forms of work are not to be despised. A man who knows no better, let him work for selfish ends, for name and fame; but he should always try to grow towards the higher motive, and to understand what that motive is. "To work we have the right, but not to the fruits thereof." Leave fruits alone. Leave results alone. What do results matter if we want to help a man? Never think what that man's attitude should be towards you. Do not care to understand. If you want to do a great or a good deed, do not trouble to think what the result will be to you.

There comes another difficult question with this sort of work. Intense activity is necessary; we must always work. We cannot live a minute without work. What becomes of rest? Here is one side of the life-struggle—work, to be whirled rapidly round in the current of social life. And here is another picture—calm, retiring, peaceful; everything peaceful around you; very little of noise; only animals, and flowers, and mountains. Neither of them is a perfect picture. If a man goes to live in this peaceful place, then, as soon as he is brought into contact with the surging whirlpool of the world, he will go to pieces; just as the fish that lives in the deep sea water, as soon as it comes to the surface, dies. Similarly those men who al-

ways live in retirement and never attempt work, as soon as they are brought into contact with the world break into pieces. Can a man live who has been used to turmoil, and the rush of life, if he comes into a quiet place? The only place he goes to is the lunatic asylum. During a certain part of my life I lived so much in lonely places that I would laugh when I read of a man being punished by solitary confinement in a cell. I lived in caves for days and days together. The ideal man is he who in the midst of the greatest silence finds the intensest activity, and in the midst of the intensest activity finds the silence of the desert. He has learnt the secret of restraint; he has controlled himself. He goes through the streets of New York, with all its traffic, and his mind is as calm as if he were in a cave, where not a sound could reach him, yet he is working intensely all the time. That is the ideal of Karma Yoga, and if you have attained to that, you have really learned the secret of work.

But we have to begin from the beginning, to take up the work as it comes to us, and slowly to make ourselves more unselfish every day. We must do the work and find out the motive power behind that is prompting us to do it. In ninety-nine out of a hundred cases in the first few years, we shall find that the motives are selfish, but gradually by persistence, this selfishness will melt, and at last will come the time when we shall be able to do really unselfish work now and then. Then we all hope that some time or other, as life rolls on, will come a day when we shall be perfectly unselfish; and the moment we have become that, our powers will have been concentrated, and the knowledge which is ours will become manifest.

"EACH IS GREAT IN HIS OWN PLACE"

According to the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, nature is composed of three forces, called in Sanskrit, *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. These, manifested in the physical world, are what we call attraction, repulsion, and the control of the two. *Sattva* is the control, and *Rajas* is the repulsion, while *Tamas* is the attraction. *Tamas* is typified as darkness or inactivity; *Rajas*, as activity, where each particle is trying to fly off from the attracting centre, and *Sattva* is the equilibrium of the two, bringing about the balance of both.

Now each man is composed of these three forces; in each of us we find that sometimes the *Tamas* prevails; we become lazy; we cannot move; we are inactive, bound down, weighed down by certain ideas. At other times activity will prevail; we try to fly off from the centre; and then at other times that calm balancing of both will prevail—the *Sattva*. Again, in different men, one of these forces is generally predominant. The characteristic of one man is that of inactivity, dullness, and laziness; the characteristic of another is activity, power, manifestation of energy; while in a third we find the sweetness, calmness, gentleness, which balance both. So throughout creation—in animals, plants, and men—we find the personifications of these different forces.

Karma Yoga has specially to deal with these three elements. By teaching us what they are and how to employ them, it helps us to do our work better. Human society is a graduated organisation. It is an organism in which there are different grades and states. We all have an idea of morality; and we all have an idea of duty; we find yet that in different countries the idea of morality varies greatly. What is re-

garded as moral in one country, in another may be perfectly immoral. For instance, in one, cousins can marry, in another this is thought to be very immoral; in one, men can marry their sisters-in-law, in another this is regarded as immoral; in one, people can marry only once; in another, many times; and so forth. So also in other departments of morality we find that standards vary greatly; yet we have the idea that there must be a universal standard of morality.

So it is with duty. The idea of duty varies much among different nations. In one country, if a man does *not* do certain things people will say he has acted wrongly; and if he does those very things in another country, people will still say that he did not act rightly. Yet we know that there must be some universal idea of duty. In the same way the people of one class of society think that certain things are their duty, and the people of another class think quite the opposite, and would be horrified if they had to do those particular things.

Two ways are left open to us, either the way of the ignorant, who think that there is only one road to truth, and all the rest are wrong, or the way of the wise, who admit that according to the mental constitution, or the different planes of existence in which we are, duties and morality may vary. So the important thing is to know that there are gradations of duty and of morality, that what is the duty of one state of life, in one set of circumstances, will not be that of another.

The following example will serve to illustrate. All great teachers have taught, "resist not evil," for non-resistance to evil is the highest ideal. We all know that if every one of us living in this country were to practise non-resistance to evil, we should be nowhere; the whole social fabric would fall to pieces; society would be destroyed; rogues and blackguards would take possession of our property, and our lives, and would do whatever they liked with us. Even if only one day of non-resistance were practised, it would lead to the utter dissolution of society. Yet, intuitively in the heart of our hearts, we feel the truth of the teaching, "resist not evil." This seems to us to be the highest ideal, although to teach such a doctrine alone, would be equivalent to condemning a vast proportion of mankind.

Not only so, it would make men feel that they were always doing wrong, cause scruples of conscience in all their actions; in fact, it would weaken them, and that constant self-disapproval would breed more vice than any other weakness. To the man who has begun to hate himself, the gate to degeneration has been opened, and so with a nation.

Our first duty is not to hate ourselves. In order to advance, we must have faith in ourselves first, and then in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God. Therefore, the only alternative that remains to us is to recognise that duty, morality, and all these things vary under different circumstances—not that the man who resists is doing something wrong, but that, in the different circumstances in which he is placed, it may be his duty to resist.

Some of you have read, perhaps, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and many of you in Western countries may have felt astonished when, in the first chapter, Krishna calls Arjuna a hypocrite and a coward because of his refusal to fight, or offer resistance. He refuses for the reason that his adversaries are his friends and relatives, but he offers the plea that non-resistance is the highest ideal of love. This is the great lesson to learn, that in every case the two extremes are alike; the extreme positive and the extreme negative are always similar: man enters this world without teeth and crawling, he goes out without teeth and crawling; when the vibrations of light are too slow we

do not see them, nor do we see them when they are too rapid ; so with sound, when very low we do not hear, when very high we do not hear. The same is the difference between resistance and non-resistance. One man does not resist because he is weak, lazy, and cannot,—not because he will not : the other is the man who, knowing that he can strike an irresistible blow if he likes, not only does not strike but blesses his enemies also. The one who offers non-resistance, from weakness, commits a sin, and as such will not receive any benefit from his non-resistance ; while the other would commit a sin by offering resistance. Buddha gave up his throne and renounced his position ; that was true renunciation. But there cannot be any question of renunciation in the case of a beggar, who has nothing to renounce. So we must always be careful when we speak of this non-resistance and ideal love, as to what we really mean. We must first take care to understand whether we have the power of resistance or not ; then, having the power, if we renounce and do not resist, we are doing a grand act ; but if we cannot resist and at the same time try to deceive ourselves with the idea that we are actuated by motives of the highest love, we are doing the exact opposite. So Arjuna became a coward at the sight of the mighty, arrayed against him. His love made him forget his duty towards his country and his king. That is why Krishna told him that he was a hypocrite. "Thou talkest like a wise man, but thine actions betray thee to be a coward ; therefore stand up and fight."

Such is the idea of the Karma Yogî. He is the man who understands that the highest ideal is non-resistance, but who also knows that it is the highest manifestation of power, and that what is called resisting evil is a step on the way towards the manifestation of this highest power, which is non-resistance. Until he has attained the highest ideal, his duty is to resist : let him work, let him fight, let him strike straight from the shoulder. Then only when he has gained the power to resist, non-resistance will be a virtue.

I once met a man in my country whom I had known before as a very stupid, dull man who knew nothing, and had not the desire to know anything, living the life of a brute. He asked me what to do to know God, how to get free. "Can you tell a lie?" I asked him. "No," he replied. "Then you must learn to do so. It is better to tell a lie than to be a brute, or a log of wood. You are inactive. You are not of the highest state, which is beyond all action, calm and serene. You are too dull even to be wicked." That was an extreme case, of course, and I was joking with him ; but what I meant was that a man must be active, in order to pass through activity to perfect calm. Inactivity should be avoided by all means. Activity always means resistance. Resist all evils, mental and physical, and when you have succeeded in resisting, then will the calmness come. It is very easy to say "hate not anyone, resist not any evil," but we know what that means. When the eyes of society are turned towards us we may make a show of non-resistance, but in our hearts it is canker all the time. We feel the want of it ; we feel that it is better to resist. If you desire wealth and you know that the whole world will tell you that he who aims at wealth is a very wicked man, you, perhaps, do not dare to plunge into the struggle for wealth ; yet at the same time, the mind is running day and night after money. This is hypocrisy, and will serve no purpose. Plunge into the world, and then, after a time, when you have enjoyed all that is in it, will renunciation come, then will calmness come. So fulfil your desire for power and everything else, and after you have fulfilled the desire, will come the time when you will know that these are very little things, and until you have fulfilled this desire, until you have passed

through that activity, it is impossible for you to come to that state of calmness and serenity. This idea of serenity has been preached for thousands of years; everyone living has heard it from his childhood, and yet we see few in the world who have really reached that stage. I do not know if I have seen twenty persons in my life who were really calm and non-resisting; and I have travelled over half the world.

Every man should take up his own ideal and endeavour to accomplish it; that is a surer way than taking up other men's ideals which he can never hope to accomplish. We take a baby for instance, and at once give him the task of walking twenty miles. Either the baby dies, or one in a thousand will crawl the twenty miles to reach the end exhausted and half-dead. That is what we generally do with the world. The men and women of society are not all of the same mind, or capacity, or of the same power of action. They must have different ideals, and we have no right to sneer at any ideal. Let everyone do the best he can for his own. I should not be judged by yours, nor you by mine. The apple tree should not be judged by the standard of the oak, nor the oak by that of the apple. To judge the apple tree, you must take the apple standard, and for the oak its own standard, and so with all of us.

Unity in variety is the plan of creation. However men and women may vary individually, there is unity in the background. The different individual characters and classes of men and women are natural variations in the law of creation. Hence we ought not to judge them by the same standard, nor put the same ideal before them. Such a course creates only an unnatural struggle, and the result is that man begins to hate himself, and is hindered from becoming religious and good.

In the morality of the Hindus we find that this fact has been recognised from very ancient times; and in their scriptures and books on ethics, different rules are laid down for the different classes of men—for the householder, the Sannyasin (the man who has renounced the world), and the student.

The life of every individual in *Karma*, according to the Hindu Scriptures, is divided into several parts. The Hindu begins life as a student; then he marries and becomes a householder; then on becoming old he retires; and lastly, he gives up the world and becomes a Sannyasin. To each of these stages of life certain duties are allotted. No one of them is superior to the other: the life of the married man is quite as great as that of the man who is not married, but who has devoted himself to some other work. The scavenger in the street is as great and glorious as the king on his throne. Take the king off his throne, make him do the work of the scavenger, and see how he fares. Take the scavenger and see how he will rule. It is useless to say that the man who lives out of the world is a greater man than he who lives in the world; it is much more difficult to live in the world and worship God, than to give it up and live a free and easy life. The various stages of life have become shortened in India to two—the householder and the preacher. The householder marries and carries on his duties as a citizen, and the duties of the other are to preach and to worship God. Now you will see which life is the more difficult. As I read you a few beautiful passages from the *Nirvāṇa Tantra* which treats of this subject, you will see that it is a very difficult task for a man to become a householder and perform all his duties perfectly.

"The householder should be devoted to God. A knowledge of God should be his goal in life. Yet he must work constantly, and perform all his duties; but whatever he does he must give it up to God." The most difficult thing in this world

to do, is to work and not care for the result; to help a man and never think that he ought to be grateful to you; to do some good work and at the same time never look to see whether it brings you name and fame or not. Even the most arrant coward becomes a brave man when the world begins to praise him. A fool can do heroic deeds when the approbation of society is his. But to do good work constantly without caring for the approbation of his fellow-beings, is indeed the highest sacrifice a man can perform. The great duty of the householder is to earn a living, but he must take care that he does not do this by telling lies, or by cheating, or by robbing others. He must remember moreover, that his life is for the service of God, his life is for the service of the poor.

"Knowing that the mother and the father are the visible representatives of God, the householder always, and by all means, must seek to please them. God is pleased with that man whose mother and whose father are pleased with him. That son is truly dutiful whose words to his parents are never harsh.

"Before parents one must not make jokes, nor show restlessness, nor display anger or temper. In the presence of mother or father a son must bow low, or remain standing until they order him to sit.

"If the householder accept food or drink or clothes without first seeing that his mother and father, his wife and children, and the poor, are provided for, he commits a sin. To his mother and his father he owes this body; hence for their good a man should undergo unending trouble.

"Even so is a man's duty to his wife. She should not be scolded, but maintained by him, equally with his mother. Even in the greatest trouble and difficulty he must not show anger to his wife.

"He who thinks of another woman besides his wife—if he touches her mentally with the least part of his mind—that man goes to dark hell. Even in the home-circle, no man should touch another woman, or her clothes. Even when the woman is not present, the clothes of any other than his wife should not be touched.

"He must not use improper language before women, and never boast of his powers. He must not say, 'I have done this and I have done that.'

"The householder should always seek to please his wife with wealth, clothes, love, faith, and words like nectar, never doing anything to disturb her peace of mind. That man who has succeeded in gaining the love of a chaste wife has succeeded in his religion, and has all the virtues."

The following duties are towards children :—

"A son should be protected until he is four years of age. After that he should be educated. When he is twenty years of age the father must not think of him as a child; he is then his own equal, and a householder himself. The daughter should be brought up exactly in the same manner, and educated with the greatest care. When she marries moreover her father should give her wealth and jewels.

"A man's next duty is to his brothers and sisters, and to the children of his brothers and sisters, if they are poor, and to his other relatives, his friends, and his servants. His duties after this, are to the people of the same village, and the poor, and to anyone who comes to him for help. If having sufficient means, the householder do not take care to give to his relations and the poor, know him to be only a brute; he is not a human being.

"The taking of excessive care about food and such matters as the clothes, and beautifying of the body and parting of the hair should be avoided. The householder

must be pure in heart and clean in body, always active and always ready for work.

"To his enemies the householder must be a hero; he must resist. This is his duty. He must not sit down in a corner and weep, or talk nonsense about non-resistance. If he has not shown himself a hero to his enemies he has not done his duty. To his friends and relatives however, he must be as gentle as a lamb.

"It is the duty of the householder to pay no reverence to the wicked; for if he reverence the wicked he becomes the patron of wickedness. It is a great mistake also, if he disregard the good who are worthy of respect. He must not be extravagant in his friendships; he must not make friends everywhere; he must watch the actions of the men with whom he desires to make friends and see their dealings with other men; then, having thought about all this, he may enter into friendship.

"Of three things he must not speak: he must not tell in public of his own fame; he must not preach his own name or his own powers; he must not boast of his wealth, or of anything that has been told to him privately.

"If he has committed a mistake, or engaged in an undertaking which is sure to fail, whether large or small, he must not talk of these things, nor make them public." What is the use of talking of one's own mistakes before the world? They cannot be undone; for what he has done he must himself suffer; he is the householder and must try next time to do better. This is also, it may be, worldly wisdom. The world would say he was not doing his duty, and that if a man does not do his duty he is immoral. The world sympathises only with the strong and the powerful. A man must not say either that he is poor, or that he is wealthy,—he must not boast of his wealth. Let him keep his own counsel; this is his religious duty." Not you see that this is worldly wisdom, but that if he behaves otherwise he is immoral.

"The householder is the basis, the prop, of the whole of society; he is the principle earner." All the poor, the weak, the children, the women, who do not work, live upon the householder. So there must be certain duties which he must perform, and these duties must be such as to make him strong to fill his own place, not such as to make him feel that he is doing things beneath his ideal. If the householder then have done something weak, or have committed mistakes, let him not say so in public. And if he is engaged in some enterprise, and knows that it is sure to fail, he must not speak of it to others. At the same time he must struggle hard to acquire, firstly knowledge, and secondly wealth. This is his duty, and if he does not do it he is nobody. A householder who does not struggle to get wealth is not good. If he is lazy, and content to lead a lazy life, he is wicked, because upon him depend hundreds. If he gains riches hundreds of others will be supported.

If there were not in this city hundreds of men who had striven to become rich, and acquired wealth, where would all that we see around us be? Where would all this civilisation, and these charitable institutions and these great buildings be, if they had not struggled?

To seek money in the case of the householder is not bad; *but that money must be for distribution.* The householder is the social centre. For him to acquire money is worship. For the householder who struggles to obtain money by *good* means is doing the same thing as the anchorite in his cell, when he is praying. *Laborare est orare.*

He must struggle by all means, to acquire a good name and certain things he must give up. He must not gamble; he must not move in the company of the wicked; he must not tell lies; and must not be the cause of trouble to others.

"People often enter into things which they have not the means to accomplish, and the result is that they cheat others to attain their ends. Then the time has to be taken into consideration; what at one time might be a failure, would, perhaps, at another be a very great success.

"The householder must speak the truth, and he must speak gently, using words that are pleasant, and will do good to others; he must not boast of his own doings, nor talk of the business of other men.

"The householder, by making reservoirs for water, by planting trees on the roadsides, by building shelters for men and animals, by making roads and building bridges, goes towards the same goal as does the greatest Yogi."

This then, is one part of the doctrine of Karma Yoga—activity, the duty of the householder. There is a line in the same book, later on, where it says that "if the householder die in battle, fighting for his country or his religion, he comes to the same goal as does the Yogi by meditation," showing that what is duty for one is not duty for another. Nor is it either said, that one duty is lowering, and another elevating, for each has its own place, and according to the circumstances in which we are placed, so must we perform our duties.

One idea stands out from all this—the condemnation of all weakness. This is a characteristic of our literature which I like, whether in philosophy, or in religion, or in work. If you read the Vedas you will find this word repeated constantly,—"fearlessness," the fear of nothing. Fear is a sign of weakness. A man must go about his duties without taking any notice of sneers, or of the ridicule of the world. If one retire from the world to worship God, he must not think that those who remain there and work for its good are not worshipping God. Neither must those who live in the world, for the sake of wife and children, think that those who give it up are low vagabonds. Each is great in his own place.

This thought I may illustrate by a story.

A certain king used to inquire of all the Sannyasi who came to his country, "Which is the greater man, he who gives up the world and becomes a Sannyasi, or he who lives in the world and performs his duties as a householder?" Many wise men sought to solve the problem. Some asserted that the Sannyasi was the greater, upon which the king demanded that they should prove their assertion. When they could not, he ordered them to marry and become householders. Then others came and said, "The householder who performs his duties is the greatest man." Of them, too, the king demanded proofs. But when they could not give these, he made them also settle down as householders.

At last there came a young Sannyasi, and the king inquired of him. He answered "Each, O King, is equally great in his own place." "Prove this to me," replied the king. "I will prove it to you," said the Sannyasi, "but you must first come and live as I do for a few days, that I may be able to prove to you what I say." The king consented and followed the Sannyasi out of his own realm and passed through many territories, until they came to another kingdom. In the capital of that kingdom a great ceremony was going on. The king and the Sannyasi heard the noise of drums and music and criers; the people were assembled in the streets in gala array, and a great proclamation was being made. The monarch and the monk stood there to see what was going on. The crier was saying that the princess, daughter of the king of that country, was going to choose a husband from among those assembled before her. It was an old custom in India for princesses to choose

husbands in this way; and each one had certain ideas as to the sort of man she wanted for a husband; some would choose the handsomest; another would take only the most learned, another the wealthiest, and so on. The princess, in splendid array, was carried on a throne, and the announcement made by criers that the princess so-and-so was about to choose a husband. Then all the princes of the country, having put on their bravest attire, presented themselves before her. Sometimes they, too, had criers to enumerate their qualifications and the particular reasons why each hoped that the princess would choose him. The princess was then carried round, and looked at them, and heard what they had to offer, and if she was not pleased she said to her bearers, "move on," and no more notice would be taken of the rejected suitor. If, however, she was pleased with any one of them, she threw a garland round his neck and he became her husband. Now the princess of the country, to which the king and the Sannyasi had come, was going through one of these ceremonies. She was the most beautiful princess in the world, and her husband would be ruler of the kingdom after her father's death. Her intention was to marry that man who satisfied her idea of beauty; but she could not find anyone to please her. Several times these meetings had taken place, and yet the princess had not selected anyone. The present occasion was the most splendid of all; more people than ever had come to it, and the scene was most gorgeous. The princess came in on a throne, and the bearers carried her from place to place. But she did not care for anyone, and all were becoming disappointed that this meeting also was to be broken up without anyone being chosen. Just then, in came a young man, a Sannyasi as handsome as if in his person the sun had come down to earth, and he stood in one corner of the assembly to watch what was going on. The throne with the princess came near to him, and as soon as she saw the beautiful Sannyasi, she stopped and threw the garland over him. The young man seized the garland and threw it off, exclaiming. "What nonsense do you mean by that? I am a Sannyasi; what is marriage to me?" Now the king of that country, thinking perhaps that this young man was poor, and therefore could not dare to marry the princess, said to him, "With my daughter goes half my kingdom now, and the whole kingdom after my death," and he himself replaced the garland on the Sannyasi. The young man threw it off once more, saying, "What nonsense is this? It is not my wish to marry!" and walked quickly away from the assembly. Now the princess had fallen so much in love with him that she said, "I must marry this man or I shall die," and she hastened after him to bring him back. Then the other Sannyasi, who had brought the king there, said, "King, let us follow this pair," so they followed after them, some distance behind. The young Sannyasi who had refused to marry the princess, walked out into the country for several miles; then he came to a forest, and struck into it, and the princess followed him, and the other two followed them. But that young Sannyasi was well acquainted with this forest; suddenly, therefore, he disappeared in some intricate part of it, and the princess was no longer able to follow him. After trying for a long time to trace him, she sat down under a tree and began to weep, for she could not tell how to get out of the forest again. Then the king and the other Sannyasi came up to her and said, "Do not weep, we shall show you the way out of this forest, but it is too dark for us to find it now. Here is a great tree; let us rest under it, and in the morning we shall rise early and show you the road by which to get away." Now a little bird and his wife and three little baby birds lived on that tree, in a nest. This little bird looked down and saw the three people under the

tree and said to his wife, "My dear, what shall be done? Here are guests in the house, and it is winter, and we have no fire." So he flew away and brought back a piece of burning fire-wood in his beak and dropped it before the guests, and they added fuel to it and made a blazing fire. But the little bird was not satisfied. He said again to his wife, "My dear, what shall we do? There is nothing to give these people to eat, and they are hungry, and we are householders. It is our duty to feed anyone who comes to the house. I must do what I can, I will give them my own body." So he plunged down into the midst of the fire and perished. The guests saw him falling and tried to save him, but he was too quick for them, and dashed himself into the fire and was killed.

The little bird's wife saw what her husband had done, and she said, "Here are three persons and only one little bird for them to eat. It is not enough. It is my duty as a wife not to let my husband's effort pass in vain. Let them have my body also!" and she plunged down into the fire and was burned to death. Then the three baby birds, when they saw what was done, and that there was still not enough food for the three guests, said, "Our parents have done what they could and still it is not enough. It is our duty to carry on the work of our parents. Let us go too." And they all three also threw themselves into the fire. But these three people, they were amazed at what they had seen, and could not eat the little birds. Somehow or other they passed the night without food, and in the morning the king and the Sannyasi showed the princess the way, that she might go back to her father. Then the Sannyasi said to the king, "King, you have seen that each is great in his own place. If you want to live in the world, live like those birds, ready at any moment to sacrifice yourself for others. If you want to renounce the world, be like that young man, to whom the most beautiful woman and a kingdom were as nothing. If you want to be a householder, hold your life a sacrifice for the welfare of others, and if you choose the life of renunciation do not even see beauty or money or power in anything. Each is great in his own place, but the duty of the one is not the duty of the other."



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